

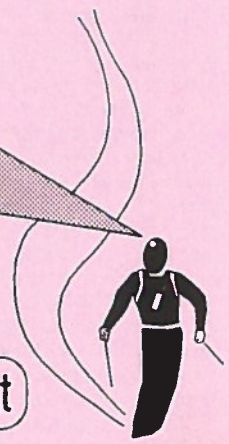
# SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.

MARCH 1997

Lake Tahoe · Truckee · Donner Summit

Next General Meeting is Monday, February 24, 1997, 7:00 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut



## The Great Ski Race

The next meeting of the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team — February 24 — will, in a great part, be devoted to the organization of The 21st Annual Great Ski Race. On Sunday, March 2, at Lakeview Cross Country Ski Area, 9:00 A.M. sharp, the gun will go off and 900 Nordic skiers will sprint, skate, stride, slog, scoot, schlep, and saunter their way over the course 30 kilometers to Truckee Town. (Along the way more than one will spin, spiral, and sprawl.) The Great Ski Race is a big, popular event, and heaps of volunteer effort are needed to make the race run smoothly and be a success. The race will not happen without *your* donation of time and energy. Please attend the February 24 meeting and become part of The Great Ski Race.

Conceived in 1977 by Skip Reedy, The Great Ski Race™ — now a trademarked name and event of the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, Inc. — has grown to be the largest Nordic ski race in the Western United States. Why is it so popular? No other cross-country ski race offers what The Great Ski Race offers: a spectacular point-to-point immaculately groomed course, computer-generated results, a full hot meal at the finish, a thigh-slappin', bootie-shakin' dance party with a real band, a veritable geyser of beer, hundreds of free raffle prizes, five-color T-shirt, race goodies, prizes for all the winners; gobs more stuff, too. It also carries the least expensive entry fee of any major ski race: 22 bucks. I'm here to tell you: this race is a *happening*.

The start of the first Great Ski Race saw about 45 skiers, many in costume, heading off wildly into the woods toward Truckee. There was then no set course. Every year more and more people entered the race as the popularity of cross-country skiing grew. In 1984, 750 skiers registered to ski the now well-established and professionally groomed race course. Race morning buzzed with an undercurrent of competitive anxiety. Skiers speculated on the klisters of the day. Families raced together. Friends competed. Crowds of onlookers gathered. The Great Ski Race was becoming a North Lake Tahoe institution. As veteran Great Ski Racer Dave Kanak says: "Skiing The Great Ski Race is more than tradition, it's religion."

The race has been held in a wide variety of weather and snow conditions over the past 20 years, testing the moxie of the competitors and race organizers alike. There have been the drenching rain storms; the racers coming through the finish line glossy, dripping, and steaming. There have been the powder storms out of Canada; the cold, slow snows testing one's choice of glide wax. There have been the lean-snow years, with Great Ski Racers having to portage through short stretches of open sagebrush. Through a kind of exalted inertia, The Great Ski Race seems to make its own weather.

The Great Ski Race continues to evolve. Last year's race saw a number of National Team skiers compete; team member Ben Husaby blitzed the course in a record-setting time of 1:10:48, V2ing the entire 30 kilometers (an act never before witnessed between Lake Tahoe and Truckee). Great Ski Race souvenirs and memorabilia are now bought, sold, and traded, some of which are regarded more highly than pocket

protectors. The grooming, the T-shirts, the food, the beer, the band, the racers: everything keeps getting better.

Volunteers are needed for a wide variety of jobs. Examples: sign preparation, parking attendants, snow shoveling, brush cutting, registration, race-bag stuffing, prize solicitation, selling Great Ski Race stuff, course setup, course cleanup, grooming, road crossing attendants, timing, *Biermeister* (sorry, I believe Gerald Rockwell's reserved that one), food preparation, food service, soup station 1, soup station 2, first aid, thank-you letters, snow removal, putting up banners, taking down banners, organizing and driving the bag trucks, radio communication, START line setup, FINISH line setup, bus organizers, cleaning out the Port-a-Potties (just kidding), ski patrol, race result runners, etc. If you are a Lake Tahoe, Truckee, or Donner Summit resident, and you received this newsletter, please attend the February 24 meeting and volunteer. Loads of fun: guaranteed. If you're not a local resident, please register for, and ski, The Great Ski Race. Loads of fun: guaranteed. And oh, have I mentioned the best reason for skiing in and volunteering for The Great Ski Race? It is the main fund-raising event of the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team.

## Truckee River Runs Bank-Full

In response to the wide-spread flooding of New Year's Day, the assistance of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was requested by Placer County and the Office of Emergency Services. Scoop Remenih, one of his snowcats, and five other Nordic Team members — Jim Granger, Joe Pace, John Pang, Diane Pang, and Jeff Rieger — traveled down the Truckee River corridor (January 2; Highway 89 was closed) from Tahoe City to evacuate any who felt threatened by the swollen river. Most residents decided to stay put; the Nordic Team evacuated one 18-year-old male from a riverside home. Good job during extremely adverse weather!

## Abracadabra — You're Lost

Nordic Team skiers Jim Granger, Joe Pace, John Rossetto, Randy Sharp, Steve Twomey, and Russ Viehman high-tailed it to South Lake Tahoe after a 3:30 A.M. callout January 31 from El Dorado County. Steve Kossokis, 41, of Chicago, Illinois, was reported missing from Heavenly Valley ski area the previous day.

Apparently... during the morning of January 30, Steve was skiing fast — and fell — launching himself à la Alice in Wonderland out of the ski area and into the woods. He followed an errant ski track through this strange wood for many hours, then parked himself on a magic tree stump for the night. The next

day he continued descending (on foot — he was "sinking too much with skis on"), eventually scaring up a passing snowmobiler. The hiler took him home, and, being from Chicago, Steve hailed a taxi back to the ski area.

## An Insight into What We Do

The business of searching and rescuing can cover a wide variety of

Continued...



Just 15 seconds into The Great Ski Race and Nordic Team member Alyson Barnes is already smiling. photo r.osterhuber



activities, and in the process unearth a broad assortment of human emotions. Long-time Nordic Team skier, searcher, philosopher, and botanist Steve Matson offers up the following thoughts, put to paper after the Augustino search of December 23, 1996 [see the February 1997 issue of Snow Line].

Last year, our search Team had just finished breakfast at the Resort at Squaw Creek following a night search down Five Lakes Creek and a helicopter evacuation the following morning. I said to Randall: "This is one of the most unique things I do." He responded to the effect that it was one of the *greatest* things he did. Despite my groggy state, I could understand and affirm that sentiment. There is something quite remarkable in being involved in a search, about belonging to a Team of great people who voluntarily go out in frequently miserable conditions to find and help others in distress. I sit at home afterwards, attempting to process the whole event; not always with the greatest ease, however, especially when the search is long, or the conditions horrific, or the outcome not the happiest.

Such was the case this last December 23rd.

There can be some quite dramatic changes that occur on a search. Some of these are psychological as when one shifts from "random search mode" to "hot tracks mode" to finally some version of "rescue mode." Other changes are purely physical or environmental, like when it starts or stops snowing, the sun goes down, or you have to cross that icy log above some raging torrent.

Rescue mode in this case [December 23] turned out to be a body retrieval. We managed to pull the body [James Augustino] from the snow cave/tree well shelter and put it and our skis on a litter that was raised by winch into a hovering chopper. A quick trip [via helicopter] back to Boreal Ski area set us back down with our comrades.

Processing of the whole experience began with dinner with many of the other searchers. We were all very curious about what each of us had done, and what more salient information had come to light as we grasped at the bigger picture, wondering how this tragedy came to be, what mistakes were made, and inevitably for me, how our experiences that day might make us more effective in the future. Of course I played out some "what if" scenarios, especially after learning that the father, Jim Augustino, had died only hours before we skied near the snow cave. I don't feel especially good about that fact, and I haven't quite been able to put those scenarios to rest. That will come in due time. Meanwhile, I don't plan to miss any future searches because of any of that. After all, they are one of the most unique things I get to do, and one of the greatest.

#### Member Of The Month

For her motivational, organizational, and educational skills, Mona Treat was honored with the newly-designed *Member of the Month* award at the February 3 Team meeting. Mona has chaired the Nordic Team's Education Committee for the past two seasons, and has most recently been organizing Winter Awareness programs for many of the local fourth-grade classes. Congratulations, Mona! Thanks for your hard work!

#### Nordic Team Training

At the last Team meeting, Training Committee co-chair Peter Sporleder handed out photocopied sheets (heraldically emblazoned with his picture [Peter, ya gotta get those hands *down*, man]) announcing the training listed below. There may be additional trainings announced at the February 24 meeting. See you there!

**February 23:** Familiarization of the terrain surrounding Sugar Bowl ski area. Meet 7:30 A.M. at the Nordic Team garage (223 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, behind the Tahoe City Chevron), or at the bottom of the Jerome chairlift (Sugar Bowl) at 8:30.

"...if the cold bothers you, the best thing is to just ignore it."

—Buddhist Monk, Tengpoche Gonda

#### Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team Officers

|                |                  |          |
|----------------|------------------|----------|
| President      | Gerald Rockwell  | 583-5376 |
| Vice President | Joe Pace         | 583-1806 |
| Treasurer      | Scott Schroepfer | 546-2809 |
| Secretary      | Jackie Thomas    | 546-3592 |
| Board Members  | Dirk Schoonmaker | 583-2929 |
|                | Steve Twomey     | 525-7280 |
|                | Medora Weiser    | 525-9248 |
|                | Chris Worcester  | 582-4648 |

#### Committee Chairs

|  |                    |          |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Cuisine                                  | Debra Schroepfer   | 546-2809 |
| Dispatch                                 | Medora Weiser      | 525-9248 |
| Education                                | Mona Treat         | 581-5759 |
| The Great Ski Race™                      | Douglas Read       | 583-6381 |
| Newaletter                               | Randall Osterhuber | 587-3092 |
| Snowcats                                 | Tony Remenih       | 583-1684 |
| Snowmobiles                              | Ray O'Brien        | 581-4358 |
| Training                                 | Dirk Schoonmaker   | 583-2929 |
|  | Peter Sporleder    | 546-0588 |
| Truck/Equipment                          | Jean Wernette      | 546-2238 |
| Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage |                    | 581-4038 |

All phone numbers area code (916).

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## Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.

Box 7703

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"21st Annual Great Ski Race" Sunday, March 2, 1997